



Bennett Valley VOICE

www.bennettvalley.org

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 6 BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION (BVHA) NOVEMBER, 2011

All of Bennett Valley Road Now Included in High Priority Road System

By Craig S. Harrison, BVHA President

On October 25th the Sonoma County supervisors increased the network of priority roads by an additional 63 miles so that about 219 miles (16%) of the county's 1,382 miles of roads will be well-maintained. The 5.4-mile stretch of Bennett Valley Road from Grange Road to Warm Springs Road is now included. Bennett Valley Road from Grange Road to the Santa Rosa city limits was added in August, and that 2-mile section was almost immediately repaved. Your BVHA has worked hard to persuade the supervisors of the importance of Bennett Valley Road to our community and I spoke in favor of this addition at the supervisors' hearing on Oct. 25, when they were considering this change.

Much of the hearing was devoted to how to pay for "pavement preservation," the county's label for long-term maintenance that includes sealing and resurfacing, for the additional high priority roads. To reduce costs, Sonoma County Director of Transportation and Public Works, Phil Demery, suggested possibly privatizing 109 miles of dead end roads that are essentially long driveways for individual owners, as well as 105 miles of low volume roads with secondary access. The supervisors were skeptical of these proposals unless the landowners agree. The board was more receptive to a proposal to reduce vegetative management and brush clearing along roadsides, which currently costs the county \$3.3 million per year, and to require roadside property owners to be responsible for such maintenance. Several supervisors expressed reservations about abandoning vegetative management entirely because public safety may be compromised. Mr. Demery had proposed using approximately \$50,000 for enforcement, to be sure property owners didn't allow vegetation to diminish visibility or obscure signs.

The supervisors approved a proposal to use up to \$2.2 million a year in solid waste franchise fees from garbage haulers for road maintenance and to look at increasing the hotel bed tax, which could generate up to \$2.5 million. They also discussed the proposals to establish road maintenance districts for dead end roads with few residents or roads with low volume and secondary access, after property owners had voted for covering their own road maintenance.

Under the current policies, 1,163 miles (84%) of county roads, including Sonoma Mountain Road, Pressley Road, Enterprise Road, Bennett Ridge and Woodside roads will receive little attention except for pothole repair, debris removal, drainage ditch clearance and bridge maintenance, when applicable. Public work officials are saying that without further pavement work these "orphan" roads will crumble and many will have to be ground up in to gravel within a decade. The board is expected to resume its discussion of this issue early next year and adopt a plan before the start of the next fiscal year, July 1, 2012.

Bennett Valley Community Association; A New Name!

Effective January 1, 2012, the Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association board unanimously approved a name change to **Bennett Valley Community Association, (BVCA)**, at their last meeting. This potential change has been discussed for some time because of all the confusion caused by the term, "homeowner's", which has legal definitions not applicable to BVHA. Perceived as a "homeowners association", it has been quite difficult to apply for insurance, grants or for Internal Revenue Services changes. This name change is expected to reduce such problems.

Save Our Sonoma Roads

By Craig S. Harrison (*This article does not reflect any official position of the BVHA's board of directors.*)

A county-wide citizens group, Save Our Sonoma Roads, has formed to work on improving the condition of our Sonoma County roads. The deterioration of our roads is at a crisis level and is directly correlated to insufficient funding for road maintenance and preservation. The goal of SOS Roads is to adequately fund the restoration of our county roads and city streets because they are vital to public safety, property values and our economic well-being. It will accomplish its mission by educating individuals, groups and businesses on how roads are funded and by advocating for appropriate allocation of public funds to roads.

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors has neglected county roads for decades, during both economic booms and recessions. While SOS Roads appreciates expanding the high priority road list to include a total of 219 miles, the supervisors have no plans to rebuild, repave or do anything but fill potholes on 84 percent of our county roads. This includes Sonoma Mountain Road, Pressley Road, Enterprise Road, Bennett Ridge and Woodside roads and numerous smaller roads in the Bennett Valley area. Without a pavement preservation program, the orphaned 1,163 miles of roads will deteriorate to a point where they can only be ground up into gravel or be completely rebuilt. At a cost of about \$1 million per mile, this would cost over \$1.1 billion, which is almost same amount for the total annual County of Sonoma budget covering all county government expenditures. SOS Roads says this is unacceptable.

Unless budget priorities are changed, you can expect most roads to continue to deteriorate at an increasingly rapid rate. The supervisors have cut back on county funding of road maintenance by 46 percent over the last twenty years and 26 percent in just the last few years. For fiscal year 2011-2012, the supervisors cut another 25 percent from the road budget although some is now being restored.

What can be done? The road problem is the result of decades of deferred maintenance and neglect by the supervisors who have chosen to devote taxpayer dollars to other priorities. The problem will not be easily solved and it will take years to improve the condition of our roads. If you are concerned about improving and restoring our road system, go to <http://sosroads.org> and sign up on the email distribution list. Encourage your friends and neighbors to sign up too so that SOS Roads can speak with a loud voice.

Personal Plea to Supervisors, re: Sonoma

Mountain Road, 10/29/11, Ken Adelson

We live on Sonoma Mountain Road ("SMR"). . . . We have owned our property since 1999. . . . Over the years, we have seen a dramatic and steady deterioration of the roadbed. It is full of potholes and bare patches; chunks of roadway pavement continue to accumulate along the sides of the roadbed. There is now a lengthy stretch of SMR (about 200 yards long), located about a quarter mile from our property, that the County purposely converted from pavement (albeit pavement in poor condition) to dirt, rocks and depressions. Every vehicle that drives on this stretch of SMR produces dust; most drivers well exceed the 15 mile per hour posted speed limit, creating suffocating dust for the neighboring properties and anyone walking or bicycling there. Vehicles, bikes and motorcycles bump along, undoubtedly much like the feel of stage coaches. . . .

The rest of SMR is dangerous enough for vehicles (private, commercial, and emergency), motorcycles and bicycles, let alone walkers. But if all of SMR is to be allowed to disintegrate into the condition of the dirt stretch, SMR will no longer be usable for normal transportation purposes. . . . (My wife broke her leg recently; she suffered enormously while the ambulance drove over the dirt stretch; imagine if emergency vehicles had to cope with the entirety of SMR in the condition of the dirt stretch.)

We believe that SMR provides an important passageway. For those traveling between Santa Rosa and Glen Ellen/Sonoma, the alternative routes - - Highway 12, or Warm Springs Road/Bennett Valley Road - - are longer and more congested. . . . There is a reason why SMR was created in the first place: it traverses the mountain located between two heavily populated areas.

If any county road deserves to be given top priority, SMR should head the list. We ask that the Board of Supervisors find a way to include SMR among the "Priority Road network" so that the dreadful condition of this key roadway is improved and maintained. Thank you.

Ken and Karen Adelson

Supervisor Valerie Brown replied to us that although SMR is an important connector, the County already invested heavily in it to repair the slide that took out part of the roadway. Ken replied to her, "I have another take on the County's heavy investment in repairing the slide on SMR: the County chose to repair the slide, rather than allow SMR to become two separate unconnected roads, in recognition of its importance as a connector between Santa Rosa and Glen Ellen/Sonoma. It doesn't make sense to me to allow SMR to deteriorate into gravel after having spent the money to fix the slide." Supervisor Brown replied, "Thanks Ken, and as I did for including Bennett Valley, I will continue to advocate for SMR."

Ken Adelson

Bennett Valley Roadwork Report

By Rob Silva, Sonoma County Road Maintenance

The crew recently installed straw wattles, rock wattles and some erosion control fabric in the ditches as a follow-up to the ditching we've done on Bennett Valley Road. The application is to reduce silt and sediment from reaching the local streams and endangering fish and wildlife. It is also a requirement of local agencies such as Fish and Game and the State Water Quality Control Board. We've been doing the same with all the ditches we've cleaned this year. In west county where the soil is more of a sandy loam and tends to erode easier, we've installed a lot more fabric than we did in the Bennett Valley area, where the soil is much more rocky and less erosion is expected.

These erosion control measures are called Best Management Practices. They will require maintenance throughout the wet season. Crews will inspect them regularly following rain storms and as silt builds up behind them we will need to remove the silt from the ditch line. Next spring, or once grass has grown back in the ditch, we will return to remove the wattles. Another requirement of these local agencies is that we do the majority of our drainage work in the summer dry months, usually designated between June 15 – October 15. In the winter months we are regulated to only do emergency ditching, such as to get standing water off the pavement in a section that would pose a safety issue for traffic. With the rain during the first week of October, we've now concluded our roadside ditching program for this year.

There are no major projects planned in the Bennett Valley area for the months of November and December. We're now moving into winter mode so pavement and drainage projects won't be scheduled again until next spring. For your area the crew will be out to clean culverts as a follow-up to the roadside ditching that's been done on Bennett Valley Road this summer, and pothole filling as needed. If Bennett Valley residents come across a safety issue, such as a pothole, tree down, etc...please ask they call our Road Maintenance office as soon as possible, at 565-5100. We have a dispatcher here Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm who will take the call, create a work request and depending on the priority, notify the supervisor. After hours and on weekends call the Sheriff Dept. at 565-2121 – they will notify our emergency contact supervisor who will dispatch the appropriate crew.

Bennett Valley Roads Clean-up

By Sandy Sandine, Bennett Valley resident

Job well done! Twenty-four Bennett Valley residents turned out on a beautiful Saturday morning to pick up trash alongside our roads. Because of the great turn-out we were able to pick up from the Galvin Park soccer fields to Savannah Estates on Bennett Valley Road; all of Grange and Crane Canyon Roads and Sonoma Mountain Road from the Fire Station to Pressley Road. Our Valley looks so clean! Please help it stay clean by keeping the trash picked up on the roads where you live. Thanks to all the following volunteers:

- **Bill & Patty Allen, Robert & Gail Baron**
- **Bobbie Blair, Norm Boling**
- **Rose, Rachel Boughton**
- **Linda Butterfield, Jeri Echeverria**
- **Mike & Patty Hickey, Bob & Juliana Hoewinb**
- **John Maderious, Kirat Sandhu (*spelling?*)**
- **Dave & Sandy Sandine, Robert (*Savannah Estates*)**
- **Ron Simpson, Bob Sorani**
- **Mike & Maggie Treinen**

Proposed Changes for Septic Systems

To send in your comments, quick action required!

Many of us in Bennett Valley have septic systems, also known as an "Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems" or OWTS. The State Water Resources Control Board has recently completed a draft state policy, referred to as the OWTS policy. A proposal is scheduled to be adopted next spring. By the time you read this, you will have missed the public hearing held in Santa Rosa on November 2, **but you can still send in your comments on what is being proposed by Monday, November 14, at 12 noon**, preferably by email, to:

[<owls_commentletters@waterbords.ca.gov>](mailto:owls_commentletters@waterbords.ca.gov)

The OWTS policy and related documents may be viewed and downloaded from the Board's website: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/owts/, or you can call 916-445-9187. For more information, there is an article in the *Press Democrat* on November 3 and/or you can find a good summary of this process at the Bennett Valley Homeowner's website, www.bennettvalley.org.

"BENNETT VALLEY WILD" **2012 CALENDAR IS HERE!**

Look for your Bennett Valley WILD Calendar NOW – at Ace Hardware, Bennett Valley Gardens, and community events at the Grange.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

6161 Bennett Valley Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Non-Emergency Business Phone: 578-7761

Board of Directors:

Mark Richardson, President; Joseph Mazeau, Vice-President; Marilee Jensen, Secretary; Arnie Tognozzi, and Don D'Avanzo, Directors.

Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday each month, 7:00 pm, at the BV Fire Station.

Please confirm meeting date ahead of time by calling 823-1084..

Bennett Valley Paid Firefighting Staff.

Fire Chief: Andy Pforsich, 823-1084

48-hour Personnel: Lieutenant Matt Tognozzi,

Engineers Travis Browne and Rene Torres

Daytime Firefighters, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm:

Engineers Patrick Tognozzi, Ronnie Lakin

Firefighters Mike Alcocer, Ly Leng and John Matej

Bennett Valley Volunteer Firefighters

There are 25 BV Firefighters of whom eight to ten are volunteers. Three rotating shifts of three volunteers each are paid a stipend to sleep overnight at the Fire Station, for improved coverage. During the day, interns are used when available, allowing the fire station to have the ideal fourth on-duty firefighter at times.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

By Darrin De Carli, Battalion Chief,

Bennett Valley and Gold Ridge Fire Districts

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District is happy to announce that we will be starting defensible space inspections this winter. The reason for starting this winter is to be proactive going into next fire season and to avoid residents having to scramble to get contractors or find spare time in their schedules to clear weeds and brush from around structures on their property as the fire season begins. By starting now, it allows the homeowner time to begin the process of clearing brush and weeds, at least 100 feet around structures as required by state law, before the warm weather hits. There is another potential advantage to complying with the defensible space regulations as it relates to the newly adopted SRA (State Responsibility Area) fees. Current legislation is focused on fee reductions for those parcels that are in compliance with the defensible space regulations. Lastly, this program will also allow our staff to continue with area familiarization and check access viability for emergency response equipment throughout the district.

When our staff comes to inspect your property, they will provide recommendations on how to comply with state regulations and answer questions you may have regarding clearing of brush and maintaining access along driveways to enable the emergency responders to quickly and safely make access to your property. CalFire is the authority having jurisdiction for enforcing defensible space regulations, not the Bennett Valley Fire Protection District. We are simply trying to assist and educate the community regarding the regulations and help make your homes defensible should a wildfire occur in our community.

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Our Two New 48-Hour Engineers for

Bennett Valley Fire *(If all the Battalion Chiefs sign off and agree, they will be promoted to lieutenants after one year.)* By Marilee Jensen

Rene Torres – Rene had always been interested in firefighting and emergency responses as a young child, but didn't pursue that interest as a young man. He was working for the Alliance Redwoods Conference Grounds, in Occidental, when he was asked to be the liaison with the Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Department. He said once he was on the fire engine with the sirens and the lights going, he knew this was what he wanted to do. He then actually became a volunteer for Camp Meeker, with him and one of the other volunteers being close to that area during the day, when he was at his full-time job. They only had 40 calls per year and the other volunteers who lived in the area covered the night time calls. Rene had to maintain a full-time job as he was married with three children. Nevertheless, on his days off, he attended the Fire Academy at Santa Rosa Junior College, and became a Saturday intern with Gold Ridge Fire District in 2000. From the year 2002 until 2009, he was paid as a part-time firefighter with Gold Ridge. Then in 2009 he was hired as a 48-hour full-time engineer at Gold Ridge. Now he could put all of his work energy into being a fire fighter and no longer just work at it on his days off. In 2011, when Bennett Valley had two openings for the 48-hour full-time engineers, he applied and was selected for one of these positions, which he started in August, 2011.

Travis Browne – At the age of 15, Trevor was an Explorer with San Rafael Fire. Then on his 18th birthday, he became a volunteer firefighter with the Tiburon Fire Department for a little over one year. This obviously appealed to him, as in 1999 he became a volunteer with the Gold Ridge Fire District. He began taking some general education classes at Santa Rosa Junior College, then entered the Fire Academy classes in 2001. He was an intern in 2003, including as a resident firefighter at the Windsor Fire Station, working 10 nights a month, from 5:00 pm until 8:00 am. He was looking to gain more firefighting experience, so he next worked for Cal-Fire for six months during one winter, at their Auburn station. In April, 2004, he was hired as a part-time engineer at Gold Ridge. Next he was hired as a 48-hour full-time engineer in 2009 for Gold Ridge. When the two positions for full-time 48-hour engineers became available in Bennett Valley, he applied and was selected for one of the positions starting in August, 2011. He is enthusiastic about working in Bennett Valley and is focusing on doing his best here.

Sonoma Mountain Trail Construction

By Craig Harrison

Kim Batchelder, with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, reports that they have completed the trailhead and access road improvements on Jacobs Ranch, and selected a trail contractor who started building the last 3.5 miles of trail the week of September 19. Kim is hoping they will be finished this fall, but the trail will not be opened to the public until spring or summer 2012 because they have to replace a bridge over Matanzas Creek on the access road to Jacob's Ranch.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

Calls for Service, September/October, 2011

By Lieutenant Matt Tognozzi

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Medical Aids – 29 | Structure Fire – 2 |
| Smoke Investigation – 0 | Vehicle Accident – 9 |
| Hazardous Condition – 5 | Other – 8 |
| Vegetation Fire – 2 | Strike Team – 1 (Bakersfield, Ca) |
| Total Calls - 56 | |

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District (BVFPD)
Highlights of Recent Agendas & Approved Minutes

Members of the public can request the meeting agenda to be emailed to them 72 hours before the board meeting or they may pick up a copy of the agenda at the BV fire station 72 hours before the meeting. Minutes from the previous month's meeting will be available to the public after board approval. Please make these requests to the Bennett Valley Fire District bookkeeper, Kori Lantow, by email, klantow@comcast.net, by telephone, 823-1084, or at the BV Fire Board of Directors' meeting.

Highlights of Agenda, September 13, 2011

New Business:

- A. RESOLUTION 11-12-01: Set the Appropriation Limit for 2011/2012 fiscal year.
- B. FINAL BUDGET: The Fire Chief and bookkeepers met with the 2011 budget committee (Mark Richardson and Marilee Jensen) and reviewed the year-end numbers. Some adjustments were made to the preliminary budget. Recommended Action: Adopt the final budget as submitted.
- C. BENNETT VALLEY/GOLD RIDGE MOU: Last month the board formed a committee to review the **Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU)** with Gold Ridge. Gold Ridge has also appointed a committee to review the MOU and to meet with the Bennett Valley. Recommended Action: Discuss the MOU and possible meeting dates with the Gold Ridge committee.

Highlights of the Minutes of the Board Meeting, September 13, 2011

New Business:

- RESOLUTION 10-12-01: The Appropriations Limit for the 2011/2012 fiscal year was passed.
- FINAL BUDGET: Chief Pforsich reported that after receiving the year end numbers (final revenue figures for 2010/2011) there was no need to make further budgetary cuts, although we will continue to pursue refinancing debt. The final budget was approved as submitted.
- BENNETT VALLEY/GOLD RIDGE MOU: Last month the board formed a committee to review the Gold Ridge MOU. Director Tognozzi and Director Richardson have since had meetings or discussions with the City of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County Fire, Rincon Valley Fire and Rancho Adobe Fire and are awaiting proposals. The Bennett Valley committee declined to schedule a meeting with the Gold Ridge committee on the MOU at this time. Once the proposals are received from the other fire agencies, they will be discussed at the October or November meetings. It was noted that, per the Brown Act, new business must be added to the agenda at least 72 hours before the board meeting in order for any action to be taken on that business.

Highlights of Agenda, October 18, 2011

Old Business:

- BENNETT VALLEY/GOLD RIDGE MOU: The committee will report on their progress with the review of the MOU.

New Business:

- STAFFING/FINAL BUDGET REVIEW: The final budget decision regarding filling the vacant firefighter position will be reviewed.

Highlights of the Approved Minutes of the Board Meeting, October 18, 2011

Public Input –

- Karen Sommer spoke, thanking Fire Chief Andy Pforsich and Battalion Chief Darrin DeCarli for their help with the emergency preparedness projects in Bennett Valley. Her letter to the board of directors is attached to the minutes.
- Larissa Goliti read a letter to the board of directors (also attached to these minutes) explaining that she worked very hard to help pass the special tax and to get the cell tower approved. She expects the district to use this tax money wisely and she would like to see more transparency in the decisions of this board, with the agendas and minutes posted on the fire district website, or in the VOICE, so the residents can review decisions made by the board.
- Diane Sweeney spoke in agreement with Larissa Goliti in that she wants more information available to the public and asked if it could be on the website.

Old Business:

BENNETT VALLEY/GOLD RIDGE MOU: Director Jensen distributed a list of items to look at in regards to requests for proposals from other fire agencies. The board discussed their intention to have the BV Fire District remain a stepping stone for firefighters in their career. They do not want to lose the volunteer, intern or sleeper programs. Although some quotes had been received, the board expressed that they were premature and based on verbal discussions only. A detailed scope of service would first need to be created and approved before beginning a proposal process with other fire agencies. The legalities involved in the proposal process could likely take the board into the next year.

The committee reported that Rincon Valley fire didn't seem interested and that the County of Sonoma is not a similar "fire station" model. Therefore they suggested only moving forward with Rancho Adobe, Santa Rosa and Gold Ridge once a comprehensive scope of service is approved. Chief Pforsich recommended the preparation of a scope of service currently provided by Gold Ridge.

Director Jensen made a motion to direct Chief Pforsich to prepare a scope of service currently provided by Gold Ridge, to be reviewed at the next board meeting, for the board to use as a basis of requests for proposals from other fire agencies. The motion was passed unanimously.

Chief Pforsich then gave a staff report outlining the management intensity required at Bennett Valley, citing examples of some of the personnel challenges he has successfully overcome, some with potential civil exposure. He explained that the quotes received were based on minimal performance and were not comparable in terms of the service, management and supervision provided by Gold Ridge, including ...the intern, volunteer and sleeper programs, which need an intense level of management to thrive.

Director Joe Mazeau then spoke regarding his professional experience in the fire service with San Francisco Fire Department for 30 years. He has lived here for 27 years and believes the training, operations, equipment and administration for BV Fire have never been at a higher level. The bottom line in firefighting is saving lives and property and always being prepared to assist the citizens that depend on us. He feels the job of the board is to manage the District as efficiently as possible while offering the proper support for fire suppression. He thinks we should look at our options, always seek to improve our operations, support our Chief ... and fire suppression personnel, and not jump at proposals from other agencies just for the sole purpose of saving some money.

- STAFFING/FINAL BUDGET REVIEW: After discussion, the board decided to go forward in filling the vacant part time firefighter position.

Fund Raising for the Emergency Communication Center at BV Fire Station

By Andy Pforsich, Bennett Valley Fire Chief

The Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association has an ongoing fundraising effort underway in conjunction with the Bennett Valley Fire Protection District to help fund an expansion bay at our fire station. Funds are being requested and have been donated for construction of an addition to the Bennett Valley fire station for emergency communications and disaster operations during devastating natural events such as wildfire or earthquake. Our community has been divided into seven neighborhoods which will collect intelligence regarding emergency response needs, such as downed trees, power lines, collapsed bridges, collapsed buildings, etc. The information will be relayed by Ham radio or cell phone to a crew of disaster response volunteers in the new room at the firehouse. This information will then be triaged and relayed to our fire crews working throughout the community.

The project is expected to cost approximately \$90,000 and \$45,000 has been collected to date. Grant funding from Fireman's Fund Insurance Co. and Exchange Bank are also being sought, along with donated time and material. Construction of the project is not expected to begin until the fundraising goal is met. If you're looking for a cause to which you'd like to make your year-end contribution, please consider the Bennett Valley disaster preparedness project for your donation. Checks are tax deductible and should be sent to Bennett Valley Fire District, 6161 Bennett Valley Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

Our Threatened State Parks

By John Dinwiddie, Bennett Valley Resident

Thanks to Susan St. Marie, Volunteer Coordinator, who contributed to this article and corrected its errors.

The presentation by Dave Gould and Laura Dixon, director and co-director of the Parks Alliance for Sonoma County, at the Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association meeting on September 15, was sparsely if enthusiastically attended. I do hope that the next time one of these groups visits us, we will be there in force to help them and to cheer them on. The Valley of the Moon Natural History Association (VMNHA), under the leadership of Jack London scholar and docent trainer Greg Hayes, has filed a credible letter of interest with the state to take over the management of Jack London State Historic Park (JLSHP). Greg is a volunteer both for State Parks and the VMNHA, as are all of the VMNHA board members.

Dave Gould explained with informed enthusiasm that with our parks suffering weekly cutbacks in staff and funds, a new, inventive way of doing things should prove exciting and also likely to deliver a more interesting and promising result than what might be if the parks continue to limp along with ever increasing uncertainty. There is for example a theater group that is negotiating for a permanent residency at Jack London State Park. This group already has a national track record for

successful collaborations of that nature. Performances and music concerts would contribute to sustaining revenue, something that I am advocating.

Our property values are at stake. To the extent that culture and sustaining revenues retreat from rural areas, leaving parks closed and roads ruined, we will all suffer in our pocket books. Since many of us moved here to enjoy a rare intersection of country life and culture, we should be concerned about the attrition that is eroding our quality of life. There is also the indirect but real insult that is being delivered to our properties and lifestyle by California's hare brained, penny wise, pound foolish decision to close Annadel, Sugarloaf, and Jack London next July 1, right here in our precious neighborhood.

It is time to rally around Dave Gould and Laura Dixon, who are fighting back. They most effectively described their cause and this should be our cause. It gave the audience ample reason to believe that their organization and that of Greg Hayes can save these parks swimmingly if one indispensable ingredient is in place. And that is us, all who can volunteer in any way to help in the continued stewardship of each park credible. And it is us who will be around to do the volunteer work required to sustain any chartered management arrangement.

And show them the money, your money. That brings me to the mission of the VMNHA, which is to raise funds to provide interpretive programs for Sugarloaf, Annadel, and Jack London and also to educate the docents in each of these parks. Two hundred and fifteen volunteers provide myriad services in all three parks. The volunteer effort that makes Jack London one of the crown jewels of the State Park system is enormous. I am a volunteer there, a piano player. My wife, Gerda, did seal watch at Goat Rock for five years. We both know intimately the size of the volunteer effort for all of the State Parks in Sonoma County and are proud to share in this effort.

Every year, Jack London State Park thanks its volunteers with an awards ceremony and dinner. This year, on September 24, two long lists were posted of those volunteers who had logged on the average of 500 hours and others whose hours were 1000 or more.

Recognition was given that evening to many, including members of the Mounted Assistance Unit, which does service in all three parks that can be edgy, such as intervening in cases of trail destructive excess mountain biking. Even being on a horse has its hazards and demands respect. As a piano player, I only risk tomatoes.

All of this effort is to be set adrift on July 1, 2012, and you can bet that the volunteers there on September 24 were ready to rise to the occasion. Join us in rising to the occasion. Follow the exploits of these two cited groups, contact them, volunteer what you can, and give what you can. This thing can be done, and it can be done well. Helen Caldicott gave us all our marching orders, when she answered someone's question, "What can we do?" "DO SOMETHING!" Thus spoke the good doctor. So just do it. Here are two e-mail addresses to use to do it:

- 1.) VMNHA: www.jacklondonpark.com
- 2.) The Parks Alliance: www.parksalliance.com

Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association (BVHA) Board Of Directors

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Website: bennettvalley.org

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**A Message From Your Membership Coordinators,
Larissa Goliti and Jean LaCombe**

Thank you for all your responses to the annual membership drive combined with your generous contributions. We now have at least 242 household memberships and we welcome each of you as BVHA members for 2011.

If you haven't yet sent in your dues, the annual dues are \$15 plus any additional contribution you want to make (these contributions to BVHA are now tax-deductible). Any amount paid in excess of the \$15 annual dues will be directed to Bennett Valley Emergency Preparation (BVEP), unless you indicate otherwise. You may either send in your check to BVHA, P.O. Box 2666, Santa Rosa, CA 95405, or pay online with a credit card or PayPal account. To pay online, go to www.bennettvalley.org (our BVHA website), then choose from the menu on the left side of the first page "Join/Renew: BVHA Membership", and follow the instructions. If you have any questions, please call Larissa Goliti at 578-3453.

Summary of BVHA Minutes

September 15, 2011

- The Treasurer, Fay Blair, reported that there has been little activity since July and the finances are within projections.

- Four options were considered for changing the name of Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association and **Bennett Valley Community Association** was selected unanimously, by the six directors in attendance, Larissa Goliti, Gary Barner, Tim Bosma, Karen Sommer, Fay Blair and Richard Lukasko. (This change will be implemented on January 1, 2012.)
- Bennett Valley Emergency Preparedness Report – Karen Sommer reports that State Farm Insurance Co. did not approve our grant application. The search for funds continues. There is a need for tools that could be used in an emergency. Please contact Karen if you have tools to donate.
- Bennett Valley Road Issues – Discussion regarding the greatly improved road surface for BV Road from the city limits to Grange Road. The Board also reviewed the vehicle counts completed by the county and complimented Craig Harrison on the successful results from his efforts in working with the county.
- Tim Bosma advised the board that as a board member for 2012, he would no longer be willing to fill the role of Secretary for BVHA.

Board of Directors' Tentative Agenda
Thursday, November 17, 7:00 pm, BV Grange Hall

- Announcements and Public Input
 - Approval of Minutes
 - Treasurer's Report
 - Name Change for Bennett Valley Homeowner's Assoc.
 - Bimonthly County Reports
 - Use of BVHA's Mailing List
 - BV Emergency Preparedness Report
 - Election Committee Report
 - Bennett Valley Road Issues
 - Speakers for 2012 – Host Debate for Our District's Open Supervisor's Seat?
 - New Business As Determined by Board
- Adjourn
- Organizational Meeting for 2012, including selection of officers

**What Happened To The 2011 BVHA
Election Ballot For The Board?**

As explained in the September VOICE, the BVHA bylaws had been changed, so that if there were the same number of candidates as there were vacancies on the Board, then each candidate would be deemed to have been elected without formal balloting. We had three candidates for three vacancies, so formal balloting was not needed. This is the same method used by the fire districts and by school districts, saving time, energy and money.

These "winning" candidates will be announced at the Annual Election Meeting, which is also our next meeting, on Thursday, November 17, 7:00 pm, at the BV Grange Hall.

Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association
P.O. Box 2666
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

www.bennettvalley.org

PURPOSES OF BVHA: *To promote and preserve the residential rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley; to educate, instruct, train and inform the local residents on disaster preparedness and emergency response as well as local land use and environmental issues; to serve as an open forum for Bennett Valley community participation; and to provide a bridge for communication between government agencies and the Bennett Valley community.*

Return Service Requested

Inside You'll Find...

Save Our Sonoma Roads, By Craig Harrison
Personal Plea re: Sonoma Mountain Road, By Ken Adelson
BV Roadwork Report, By Rob Silva
BV Roads Clean-up, Septic System Proposals, BV Calendar
BV Fire; Defensible Space Inspections, New Engineers, Service Calls
Fund-raising for BV Emergency Communication Center
Highlights of BV Fire Recent Agendas, Minutes
The Future of Our Threatened State Parks By John Dinwiddie
BVHA Board, Membership, Minutes, Agenda & Election Information

Bennett Valley Community Calendar

Mark your calendars now!!

- **BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION:** The next meeting is on Thursday, November 17, 7:00 pm.
- **BENNETT VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT:** The Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 pm, at the Bennett Valley Fire Station. Please call 823-1084 to confirm meeting date ahead of time.
- **BENNETT VALLEY GRANGE HARVEST FEAST!** The Bennett Valley Grange invites you to join them for a **Thanksgiving dinner on Friday, November 18 at 6:00 pm, free of charge.** They'll provide the turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy and coffee. In return, they're asking you to bring a side dish and your own beverage. If you're planning to join them, please make your reservations at 544-3721.
- **AMATEUR RADIO (Ham Radio) LICENSING IN JUST ONE DAY:** (From website smrs) Below is a date for the one day licensing class and exam. The fee is \$25.00. The class is scheduled at Petaluma Senior Center, 211 Novak Drive, Petaluma, on Saturday, December 10, starting at 9:00 am, with the exam at 1:30 pm or earlier. Contact Dale at 762-0414 or wb6tms@arrl.net
- **SONOMA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS** usually meets every Tuesday (except weeks when there is a legal holiday), at varying times, 575 Administration Drive, Santa Rosa. Valerie Brown is the Supervisor for our First District. You may call her or her District Director, Jennifer Hainstock, at 565-2241, if you have any questions or concerns.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- For emergencies, use your landline or your cell phone to call **911**. To talk to someone at the Sheriff's office 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to either report concerns that may be an emergency or to discuss a situation that may require law enforcement response, call **565-2121**.
- Call Sonoma County Road Maintenance, at **565-5100** to report safety issues, such as dangerous potholes, fallen trees or landslides and to request possible help with litter control and bulk trash in the road. For more information on road maintenance, see Page 3.
- Call Sonoma County Animal Control, at **565-7100**, regarding the removal of dead animals along the road.
- Call California Highway Patrol, at **588-1400**, if debris is causing imminent traffic hazards on county roads.